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# Slavoj Žižek and the Ontology of Political Imagination

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## Introduction

What Žižek's critics and readers alike often fail to recognize in his work is the fundamental problematic underlying his own political analysis: that of the apparent foreclosure of "political imagination" and, by consequence, the very vehicle for true change. Although we can picture the end of the world in a multitude of horrifying manners – biological warfare, nuclear holocaust, an asteroid destroying all life on the planet, a quickly spreading, incurable disease –, we are astonishingly unable to envision any fundamental change within the fabric of the current sociopolitical order. Without such imagination, how could we accomplish an authentically political or revolutionary act, which could immanently reconfigure the world in which we live? Yet, given the radical strength of capitalism, which is capable of perpetuating itself despite the fact we are constantly faced with the reminder

of the horrors it creates, is imagination even enough to guarantee the possibility of such an act? Or are we on all sides confronted with the inevitability of defeat? In order to reconstruct Žižek's answers to these questions, we are forced to leave the terrain of his sociopolitical writings and confront three fundamental concepts that Žižek appropriates out of German Idealism: the Schellingian logic of the (e/ir)ruptive *Grund*, the Hegelian notion of tarrying with the negative, and the Schellingian-inspired concept of ontological catastrophe.

As an attempt to explain the emergence of a freely existing transcendence (subjectivity) out of a field of self-determining immanence (nature), the Schellingian logic of the *Grund* lays the foundation for Žižek's own radicalization of capital as an impersonal dance of solipsistic speculation that hegemonizes our lives. However, quasi-transcendental freedom thus displayed by capitalism appears to, in the same breathe, make any attempt to fight against it futile. But one thing that German Idealism, and most especially Hegel's concept of tarrying with the negative, teaches us is that a deadlock is never merely a pure impossibility, the admit of defeat, but always already signals the possibility of dialectical change that could solve it. Although at this juncture both Hegel and Marx fall upon an explicit teleology of the political, Žižek is able to prevent the incorporation of a historical determinism into his philosophy by focusing on the moment of irremovable contingency and unpredictability in all dialectical movement. This moment is then radicalized by the decisive concept linking his politics and ontology, that of the "ontological catastrophe" implied in the ontogenesis of subjectivity, which establishes two things: not only that the pure I, grounded by a parallax split in being, is prevented from being reducible to the neuronal interface of the brain, but also, and more relevant for us in this context, from being completely subsumable within ideological discourse and the movement of capital. As the impossible "in-between" protruding out of both substantial being and the symbolic structures of culture, the Žižekian subject is characterized by a restless negativity forever capable of political imagination and thus founding new world orders. Capitalism, political imagination, and ontology are intrinsically related problematics in Žižek's "practical" writings (to follow the Kantian two-fold division of philosophy).

## I. The *Grund* of Capital and the Horror of Economic Parallax

In the second chapter of the *Fragile Absolute*, Žižek confronts head-on “[t]he automatic reaction to *The Manifesto* of today's enlightened liberal reader”:

isn't the text simply *wrong* on so many empirical accounts – with regard to its picture of the social situation, as well as the revolutionary perspective it sustains and propagates? Was there ever a political manifesto that was more clearly falsified by subsequent historical reality? Is not *The Manifesto*, at its best, the exaggerated extrapolation of certain tendencies discernible in the nineteenth century? (Žižek 2000a: 11)

In contradistinction to such reactions, Žižek endeavours to demonstrate not only that Marx's analysis of capital still displays an irreducible truth, but more strongly that it holds more truth than ever before by concentrating on several key textual moments in the *Communist Manifesto*.<sup>1</sup> Citing Marx and Engels at length, Žižek highlights four aspects of capitalism that are just as evident today as in the nineteenth century. (i) *A constant, never-ceasing need of revolutionizing*. In order to exist, the bourgeoisie must unrelentingly revolutionize the means and relations of production since otherwise they would not be able to compete or stay afloat in the market economy. That means that societal relations, once defined by stability and relatively unchanging tradition, are now characterized by an “uninterrupted disturbance” and unbearable uncertainty for the future (Marx & Engels 1985: 83; Žižek 2000a: 10). (ii). *Unending market expansion*. So that capital can be constantly generated, the bourgeoisie must find and create new market niches for their products. This expansion occurs first as an imperialist, external expansion of production through the inclusion of formerly isolated, secluded regions in the world-market and as colonization, but is then continued in the immanent intensification of the process of commodification, either through privatization or the endless transformation of various activities into services. (iii) *The loss of self-sufficiency and the interdependence of all nations*. Through the expansion of the world-market, there emerges a new “cosmopolitan” society in every country. Not only do we eat the same food, but we also watch the same movies, listen to the same music. All our old needs, which could once be satisfied by regional products and economies, are replaced by new ones founded upon and created by the complex system of capitalist relations. This not only means that old, local businesses are constantly being overthrown by new industries, but also that material is drawn from all over

the world in order to satisfy desires created by capitalist economy. (iv) *The new, radical horrors produced by capitalist relations*. Like Marx himself, Žižek recognizes the ambiguous nature of the effects of capitalism. Although its global dynamic simultaneously liberates us from the ghosts of tradition and creates a new epoch of human evolution, we must also realize that “it generates its own monstrous ghosts (Žižek 2000a: 11).

For Žižek, it is evident that Marx's descriptions of the essence of capitalism still reveal something irreducibly fundamental about our current sociopolitical and economic situation. They are in no way refuted by history as many would like to make us believe. But Žižek goes even further. If we take seriously Marx's analyses of the self-enclosed, self-enhancing mad dance of capital, today we cannot simply say that its solipsistic circulation in the world-market is pure ideology because it abstracts from real, concrete individuals, on whose ordinary productivity it depends so that money can be gained through mere speculation: the capitalist world-view is not rendered possible by a primordial “misperception” of social reality, a “reification” of man's productive, world-generating capacities into one commodity among others.<sup>2</sup> Financial speculation has become the Real of our lives in a way never before imaginable: it is 'real' in the precise sense of determining the very structure of material social processes: the fate of whole strata of populations, and somethings of whole countries, can be decided by the 'solipsistic' speculative dance of Capital, which pursues its goal of profitability with a blessed indifference to the way its movement will affect reality” (Žižek 2000a: 12). Consequently, for Žižek the true horror of capitalism is the radicalization of the concept of violence: we are no more repressed and dominated by a specific, given class, “concrete people and their evil intentions,” but rather by the faceless neutrality of an automatic, transindividual and non-localizable system, the complex, ever-changing matrix of economic fluctuations in the world-market.<sup>3</sup> We can no longer say that people as such control the movement of capitalist-economic relations. But how could this split, this primordial division, between concrete men and the logical movement of capital, which appears to have gained its own irreducibility spontaneity, arise out of our own activity?

Žižek's appropriation of Marx's analysis of the solipsistic, self-enhancing dance of capital gives expression to an emergent transcendence whose self-positing autonomy makes the sphere out of which it has arisen radically non-coincident to self through its dialectical usurpation/colonization and therefore displays the same parallax structure as his own explication of the ontogenesis of human subjectivity out of the vital throes of nature.<sup>4</sup> The Žižekian subject is a catastrophic negativity immanently produced within the

self-enclosed, determined system of substantial being, an irremovable “extimacy” that tears apart and irrevocably restructures its immediacy from the inside out. Žižek locates the specific moment of the emergence of this paradoxical immanent transcendence (a logical overlapping of internality and externality) in the neuronal interface of the human brain,<sup>5</sup> within which nature has achieved such a degree of complexity and dynamism that it can no longer sustain itself under its own rule and law. Various neurological mechanisms overlap and short-circuit, thereby generating a logical zone of irreducibly self-relational activity that occurs within the interstices of the biological weave. By instituting such a core of self-relationality into the neuronal interface of the brain, this short-circuit successfully causes a breakdown of instincts as that which determine in advance an animal's interaction with its environment: this disturbance in the rhythms of nature and its causal system of laws produces an irreducible freedom, even if it nevertheless remains ontogenetically and ontologically dependent upon nature for its being (nature must persist as obstructed if man is to remain transcendently autonomous; the ontological catastrophe that is out metaphysical basis cannot be sursumed or annihilated). The question, then, is how a parallax gap, an irreducible split or distance to self, could emerge from *within* the self-regulated biochemical and electrical activity inside the skull, how “the 'mental' itself explodes within the neuronal through a kind of 'ontological explosion’” (Žižek 2009b: 175). The question and problematic here is distinctly *Schellingian* and finds its finest expression in the latter's *Freiheitschrift*: What is the nature of the copula in judgement?<sup>6</sup> Ground/nature *is* existence/free subjectivity) in exactly the same way that the neuronal *is* the mental for Žižek: the copula here does not primordially distinguish a relation of identity or pure equivalence, so that the latter is entirely subsumable under the former (ground = existence, the neuronal = the mental); it represents an activity which, through the logical self-withdrawal of its pervasiveness and primordially, results in the production of irreducible difference (ground *generates* existence, the neuronal immanently *gives rise* to the mental), where each exist as opposites and therefore autonomous to one another, although nevertheless retaining an internal thread of logical interconnectivity or mutual dependence at an originary level of theoretical investigation.<sup>7</sup> Here we must recognize an implicit wordplay in Schelling: the copula in judgement (*Urteil*) is not merely an act of mind, a mental synthesis bringing together a subject and a predicate into relation to one another, but the expression of primordial ontological division (*Ur-teil* as *ursprüngliche Teilung*). The principle of identity should be able to explain irreducible breaks in the fold of being, instead of subsuming everything under dead univocity and

claustrophobic immanence: “This principle does not give expression to a unity which, revolving in a circle of sameness, would be unprogressive, and thus insensitive or unalive. The unity of this law is immediately creative” (Schelling 2003: 227). But this freedom, a radical freedom within dependence, comes at a price: this detachment from immersion in nature exhibited by other animals enables us to devastate and dominate our ground for own egotistical needs and thus risk the ground our own existence.

In the case of capitalistic production, however, we see the exact same phenomenon of an emergent transcendence in all of its conceptual contours, except here the register of *human* activity instead of *natural* substance. An “extimacy” immanently emerges out of the creative life-world of human social reality and interaction, an unforeseeable and unexpected force that begins to hegemonize our being by displaying a degree of freedom and autonomy over and above own actions, demanding to be understood in terms of its own irreducible activity and self-regulating laws, even if it is ultimately a product of and therefore dependent on our concrete activity. Through the unbelievable growth of population and market expansion that we have experienced in the past century, the economic interface determining our existence has grown so complex in this particular juncture in history that it has acquired a life of its own. It arises above the productivity of man and begins to colonize it: the concrete, self-totalizing relations of human sociopolitical life pass over into the solipsistic, self-enhancing dance of capital, its own erratic internal and spontaneous fluctuations, which present themselves as infinitely disconnected and separated from the existential needs of those living individuals whose activity sustain it and even begin to form and move them. Just as the human subject usurps the primary position of nature in a dialectical shift from substance to subject, so too does the logic of capital risk overthrowing us and the virtually positive space of self-unfolding activity that we have created. Moreover, this usurpation demonstrates the characteristic *Todestrieb* integral to the dialectical process of a transcendental parallax split, except now reflected unto itself: just as the anorexic eats *nothing* or the romantic lovers *die* for love epitomize the necessary link between human freedom and destructive psychopathology, capitalist relations exhibit the same logical basis of self-consuming fire and self-lacerating rage (Schelling's *sich selbst zerreiende Wut*<sup>8</sup>). That capital functions with no consideration of the ground upon which it depends to such an extent that it could annihilate the concrete sociopolitical and natural foundation out of which it has arisen is a necessary moment of its truth and strength: freedom is only possible within the cracks which open up the space necessary for self-positing. Representing an irreparable break with that which came before

(the painful birth of two out of self-contained one), freedom is necessarily unruly, uncontainable, and threatens to devour everything in all of its avatars.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the void of subjectivity and logic of capital strangely coincide: not only do they both lack positivity in and of themselves, but, like a sickness of disease in Schellingian logic, they negatively warp and distort the mechanisms and vital substance from which they emerge by means of their own self-assertion like a black hole. Therefore, the vicious dance of capital signals a logical antagonism within the symbolico-logical structure underlying our society, an unpredictable and perhaps irremovable consequence of an emergent breach within our existing symbolic order, which has gained a devastating degree of self-relationality. Consequently, capitalism is so violent and horrifying for Žižek: it has a life that exceeds and transcends us as concrete individuals. Just as we are nature in its mode of denaturalization and ultimately irreconcilable with it, so too is capitalism human activity in the process of dehumanization and autodisruption.

What we see in the genetic basis of subjectivity and capitalist relations is the same emergence of an extimate kernel from within a plane of immanent, self-regulating activity, a devastating transcendence which parasitically hegemonizes and dominates its host, forever warping its own self-unfolding movement through its own self-relational core, but with a crucial difference. Whereas the ground constituting the ontologico-foundational basis of human autonomy represents an irrevocable catastrophe in the fold of substantial being, the negativity that we see positing itself within the logic of capital emerges from within the interaction of various virtual structures and contents that are of themselves created and generated in response to the originary void of the subject. By opening up its own zone of self-enclosed, self-propagating activity, the transcendental field of capital is doubly removed from what we normally take as “positivity” and displays a solipsistic “ideality” even more psychotically removed from the world than the alienating structures of language. In this sense, the virtual space set up by self-relating negativity of the human subject serves as the basis for a radically self-subsistent economy cut off from both the needs of concrete men *and* the ecological balance of nature in a move that articulates the logical self-unfolding of the Schellingian primordial division (*Ur-teil as ursprüngliche Teilung*) in the moment of the rupture of existence from ground, which we already see hinted at in Marx's descriptions of the internal transformation of simple commodity circulation to the circulation of value as capital (C-M-C to M-C-M).

Within the confines of Žižek's philosophy, this doubling of the ground-existence relation (the autonomous, self-relational existence of the human subject which in turn

grounds free solipsistic capital relations) demonstrates the insurmountable power of the negative while simultaneously revealing something essential about the ambiguous and unpredictable nature of dialectical movement. Absolutely nothing is saved or above the lacerating automovement of negativity because there is an irremovable and constitutive contingency at the heart of all (onto)logical activity. Of itself, it is radically indifferent, faceless and anonymous: not only does it cause miracles<sup>10</sup> (human freedom from the claustrophobic enclosure of substance, the event of political revolution), but also tragedy, horror and monstrosity (natural disasters, deformities, diseases, unforeseeable breakdowns, economic horrors, complete sociopolitical ruination). Because there is no Other of the Other possible within parallax ontology, there is no overarching principle guaranteeing the self-unfolding, self-harmonizing and complete unity of any sphere of activity, whether it be metaphysical, scientific or political. The negative, now understood as unsurpassable internal limit and extimate abrasion, always has the potential to posit itself immanently within any given system or order through the latter's own activity – and the more complex any given system gets, the more likely that it will, insofar as it becomes more difficult for it to sustain and conserve its established unity: without totalizing enclosure, the greater the systematic complexity and intricacy, the more we can expect the possibility of the overlapping of faculties and fields, notional interstices and logical antagonism. There is no all-embracing unity of the world, only the infinite proliferation of fracture lines as it attempts to sustain itself in being. The transcendental spontaneity of capital over us points to the radical, self-imposing and shattering contingency of the world and its total lack of implicit concern and meaning, just as the emergence of human freedom establishes that nature is sick unto death, a never-ending grasping after its own breath.<sup>11</sup> Being is predicated upon disorder, mistake, collapse, and breakdown: negativity is primordial and originary to all true movement; it precedes and supersedes all unity.

## **II. Tarrying with the Negative and the Deadlock of the Real**

At this juncture we can finally try to grasp the multifaceted meaning of the Real in Žižek's political philosophy and just how much it is informed by his reactualization of German Idealism. If the Real is a logical antagonism or the excluded Other of the symbolic order, it expresses itself primordially in the form of a pure impossibility, a trauma whose violent upsurge risks to irrevocably tear apart the consistency of our world. Not only does this mean that its monstrous impenetrability threatens to destroy us and must be held at a



distance if we are to sustain a basic level of symbolico-subjective consistency, but also that the psychoanalytical excavation of the sociopolitical and economic Real underlying our lives risks leading to impasse, resignation and forfeit, rather than opening up a sphere of authentic, revolutionary action. Žižek himself recognizes having falling succumb to this in his early writings. Commenting on his book the *Sublime Object of Ideology*, he says:

Although I still stand by the basic insights of *The Sublime Object*, it is clear to me, with hindsight, that it contains a series of intertwined weaknesses. First, there is the philosophical weakness: it basically endorses a quasi-transcendental reading of Lacan, focused on the notion of the Real as the impossible Thing-in-itself; in so doing, it opens the way to the celebration of failure: to the idea that every act ultimately misfires, and that the proper ethical stance is heroically to accept this failure. (Žižek 2008: xi-xii)

But how can infinite obstruction coincide with a world-founding beginning? How can the functional breakdown of the Symbolic, a structural impossibility internal to its very fabric, lead to a new virtual positivity and matrix?

By identifying the Lacanian Real with the Hegelian notion of tarrying with the negative, Žižek is able break out of this practico-concrete deadlock. Both concepts represent the same phenomenon: an experience of symbolic inconsistency and breakdown, of the internal limit and failure of the logical fabric of our world. Just as in Lacanian psychoanalysis, this encounter is not merely conceptual or theoretical for Hegel: it touches the deepest kernel of our being in all of its dimensions (existential, ethical, political, etc.). Because Hegel wishes to flesh out the paradox of running up against non-coincidence *within* consciousness and reason, it is very easy for Žižek to use Lacanian language when discussing him and speak of Hegelian negativity as “traumatic,” “impossible or “monstrous.” Yet, this coming together of the Real and the negative is not a mere superimposition of Lacanian categories unto Hegelian absolute idealism: it simultaneously forces us to expand the conceptual range of the former insofar as failure and impasse, which is simultaneous with the “suffering“ of the subject finding itself powerless in front of obstacles insurmountable from his current symbolic position, are only a specific moment of the dialectico-historical process and cannot in and of themselves articulate the full meaning of the automovement of negativity at its core. For Hegel, the Real is *never* a mere obstruction that can never be sursumed<sup>12</sup>: although it is only a negative concept – the Real exhibits absolutely *no* positivity; it is only instilled with meaning retroactively from a new position which incorporates it –, nevertheless it expresses an element of potential productivity, it establishes *the possibility of act*. Internal

limits and immanent failure are always the impetus for movement and change. Like Hegel, Žižek concentrates on the Real and is interested in these primordial experiences of devastating breakdown and logico-existential deadlock because he sees in them the motor of the dialectic and consequently true life of the subject:

Death, if that is what we want to call this non-actuality, is of all things the most dreadful, and to hold fast to what is dead requires the greatest strength. Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do. But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being. This power is identical with what we earlier called the subject. (Hegel 1977: 19).

The significance of tarrying with the negative for Žižek's political philosophy cannot be overestimated. It signals an always formally possible way out: if the constitutive feature of the life of the subject is its ability to confront the negative, then if this power was cultivated enough it would prevent him from stagnating within the claustrophobic confines of ideology. As that which tarrying with the negative, only comes into being by looking symbolic death in the face, the subject protrudes out of any given symbolic system, is always minimally non-coincident with it, because it is *irreducible to the Symbolic as such*: being something "more" than its cultural and political determinations, the latter's inconsistency does not equate with a complete, apocalyptic collapse. It is precisely for this reason that the subtitle of Žižek's *magnus opum* the *Ticklish Subject* is "the absent centre of political ontology": as a pure self-relating negativity, the subject is always already more than its ideological entrapment; it is always already the condition of the possibility of an authentically political act insofar as it signals the potential death of any order through its power to radically confront the internal contradictions of the order within which it finds itself, even if this means necessary symbolic dismemberment. The negative is able to pave the way for a new sociopolitical and economic positivity because, although it in and of itself is only an encounter with a limit-situation and expresses no content, a recognition of a limit already is in some fashion the way towards its overcoming. Consequently, Žižek's own philosophy is an endeavour to thematize the negative determination within the logical structure of capitalism and therefore let it appear in its dialectical fullness so that its

potential productivity can be freed.

Although Žižek relies heavily upon Marx in order to describe the Real of capital, nevertheless he is at odds with Marx's own philosophy. For Žižek, Marx oversteps the bounds of dialectical thinking by articulating the historical necessity of the communist revolution and outlining the features of the utopian classless society it would bring forth. While exposing the various problems inherent to the logic of capital, Marx also came to recognize its power and potential to improve our quality of life. With the rise of capitalism, we see a constant drive towards revolutionizing, a never-ending, hectic evolution within the core of our civilization which reaches all corners of the world. But this astounding productivity is inherently ambiguous, a double-edged sword. What Marx had hoped for – that we could not only conserve this productivity through the sursumption of its internal contradictions in a new, golden age of humanity, but also unleash its dormant power in its fullness – can be only a fantasy. Nevertheless, Marx was right according to Žižek: the logic of capitalist production is its own obstacle; but what he failed to understand was that its condition of possibility and impossibility conceptually coincide.<sup>13</sup> One cannot merely remove the horrors of capitalist and then liberate its limitless productivity: the apparently contingent conditions of capitalist exploitation and violence on the masses lie deep within the essential notional structure of its very productivity.<sup>14</sup>

Marx's descriptions of the dialectical sursumption of capitalism in communism are therefore false not merely because they unconsciously fall prey to the fantasy of capitalism, but also because they hold on (at least in certain brands of Marxism) to a vision of a possible society in which all antagonisms are annulled. Marx does not see the disastrous implications of a teleology of historical determinism and, in this respect, Marx was *not radical enough*. His philosophy is too faithful to the conservative conception of Hegelian history. For Žižek, we can no longer return to a pre-modern concept of a balanced, harmonious society; antagonism and conflict are constitutive of every system, every possible order – there is no Other of the Other which would render possible a final phase of human sociopolitical evolution wherein man would be finally reconciled with the rhythms of substantial being and with one another. This would threaten not only the very irremovable negativity which is the foundational basis for dialectical movement and thought, but also the true life of the subject, which can only be insofar as there is a minimal level of non-coincidence. Moreover, Marx's adhesion to the ideal of a conservative Hegelian philosophy of history also brings the political drive of his philosophy into danger. By inscribing a dialectical necessity into the heart of historical movement and prophetizing

the coming revolution, Marx jeopardizes the possibility of an authentically political act. We should not merely wait and hope for the coming revolution: it can only be brought forth in the here and now through out actions. A necessary, self-unfolding teleology threatens to make the subject powerless and rob it of its own irreducible power: it risks depriving the subject of the traumatic, earth-shattering experience of irremovable anxiety and unbearable restless necessary to tarry with the negative and actualize its potential; teleology excludes the urgency and the internal drive forward implicit in non-coincidence. Instead of a political engagement, we are left with an overwhelming quietism. Consequently, in the Žižekian dialectic there is not only no goal to history, no logical finality, which we gradually move towards through the inner movement of reason, but, more radically, also no guarantee that a given non-coincident state will be sursumed through the ruse of (ethical, political, philosophical) world-history. *There is nothing but radical contingency and the insurmountable groundlessness of human existence: it is all up to us to create our own future.* The Žižekian rethinking of dialectics is motivated by practical and not merely theoretical concerns.

Despite the fact that Žižek is extremely critical of the positive aspect of Marxist philosophy, he nevertheless demands a reactualization of the communist hypothesis within the context of the today's situation.<sup>15</sup> But what could such a communism entail, if it necessarily lacks a programmatic structure? A communism for today cannot be a Kantian regulative idea or a utopian socialist dream. Because communism emerges out of a direct confrontation with the non-coincidence at the heart of our capitalist society, in and our itself the idea can express no determinate content: communism is *only* the name of the political movement that fights against the multifaceted antagonisms at the heart of our sociopolitical and economic existence.<sup>16</sup> Through the *naming* of these antagonisms, it attempts to immanently reconfigure the current constellation from the inside out by means of an empty symbolic gesture of creating a quilting-point, a new master signer able to transform the coordinates of the possible and impossible: it is the place of the battle itself, the symbolic zone of internal contradiction as such, and *not* the solution.<sup>17</sup> Žižek categorically refuses to speculate what the solution could look like: given the rupturing parallax logic of Žižekian dialectics, one is prohibited from saying anything positive about the new before its own event; by radically reconfiguring (political) ontology from within its own immanent negativity, an act must be understood in its infinite self-positing spontaneity. Instituting its own order, it cannot be comprehended from within the confines of the old out of which it had arisen as pure extimacy and thus only appears as a genuine structured

object of discourse after its self-caused restructuring of the world.

Žižek's materialist presuppositions are here two-fold: not only is there no pre-assignable schemata, no all-comprehensive formula for *any* truly political act, or any prediction of its progression possible, but also the need of communism itself as an emancipatory negative trajectory point guiding action can only be justified by reference to concrete social issues. The major problematic plaguing much of Žižek's work is therefore to disclose this necessity of the communist hypothesis. Although he constantly mocks Fukuyama's idea of liberal democratic "end of history," Žižek recognizes that this dream is ultimately only a reflection of a deeply rooted belief in our society. Žižek therefore endeavours to expose the limitations of this conviction and thereby create a new opening for action. Consequently, there is only one task that we can execute today for Žižek, we who are so lost in the ideological agonies of capitalism: we must more than ever *reactualize* Marx, we must *repeat* his dialectical critique of the logic of capital *without* an utopian ideal as a fundamental presupposition. This means that we need theory more than ever: there can be no direct praxis today, no world-changing revolution, because we cannot envisage a world outside of capitalism and any attempt to articulate what this beyond would be risks, like Marx, ending up lost in the trap of ideological fantasy of unleashed productivity. However, that does not mean that "theory will provide the magic formula, capable of resolving the practical deadlock."<sup>18</sup> It is only the beginning. We need political imagination, but this itself can only emerge within the non-coincidence of negativity as that which incites and instigates it.

The only true question today is: do we endorse the predominant naturalization of capitalism, or does today's global capitalism contain antagonisms, which are sufficiently strong to prevent its indefinite reproduction? There are four such antagonisms: the looming threat of an ecological catastrophe; the inappropriateness of the notion of private property in relation to so-called "intellectual property"; the socio-ethical implications of new techno-scientific developments (especially in biogenetics); and, last but not least, the creation of new forms of apartheid, new Walls and slums. (Žižek 2009a: 90-91)<sup>19</sup>

These four limit-situations clearly formulate not only the relevance of the proletariat for today, but also the immanent radicalization of the concept through contemporary historical developments: what so starkly separates us from Marx's epoch is that it is not only one determinate class (the working class) who are being robbed of their life substance through the systematic exploitation of another class (the bourgeoisie) who own the means of

production – *but, rather, and more radically, due to the horrifying anonymity of the autonomous, machine-like fluctuations of the world-market, which resound like an alien droning intruding upon us, yet is an excessive, grotesque life colonizing us from the inside out, we are all being reduced to a level of bare subjectivity.*

There is an irreducible difference between the first three limit-situations and the fourth. The first three limit-situations signal a privatization of our common substance, the very field that breathes life into our existence, and thus represent an infringement on the foundation of our existence by big business. But one cannot exaggerate the gravity of the contemporary situation: it is not only our *freedom* and *essence* that we could lose, but *everything*. The end of the world is no more the stuff of science fiction, but a real possibility. Interestingly, however, Žižek does *not* fight for a reactualization of the communist hypothesis because of these first three limit-situations. Without the fourth, the other three lose their subversive core because one can understand how they could be integrated into the very heart of the capitalist logic. By means of political measures and the infinite revolutionizing potential of capitalism, the ecological crisis or the unethical implications of technological development could be solved so that the current situation with its hierarchical organization of society could perpetuate itself. Here, it is a matter of life and death: either the parasitic, faceless logic of capital coincides with the concrete needs of our existence, or we exhaust the possibilities of our society and fall into extinction. But what the malleability of capitalism cannot solve, according to Žižek, is the problem of *justice* because it lies completely outside of the solipsistic logic of capital. Although capitalism could avoid the coming total ruination, a reinforcement and strengthening of the existing order and the social structures necessary for the continual self-enhancement of capitalist relations, even if more aware of the need of “balance,” cannot of themselves solve the numerous injustices at the heart of our society. Indeed, it could even intensify them. Although the first three, therefore, rob us of our ethical substance, the fourth renders impossible a *political space* for those who are paradoxical outsiders having no place immanently within the symbolic constellation even though they are internally a constitutive and irreducible part of it. For Žižek, communism is therefore synonymous with the name of the battle of the excluded who, against all risks, demand their right for political participation and in so doing highlight the internal contradictions of our world and the need for its drastic overhauling in an undeniable manner. Consequently, it is identical with the fight for the radicalization of the principle of democracy, its limitless extension. Contra Marx, for Žižek communism has *nothing* to do with economy as such, but, rather, bases itself upon *justice*,

with a justice which would lead to a reappropriation of the *commons* outside of their submergence within capitalist relations. As Žižek said in a speech he gave during the Occupy Wall Street protest at Zuccotti Park: “We don’t want higher standard of living. We want a better standard of living. The only sense in which we are Communists is that we care for the commons. The commons of nature. The commons of privatized by intellectual property. The commons of biogenetics. For this, and only for this, we should fight” (Žižek 2011: unpaginated).

Yet, this unbearable non-coincidence already points to its possible dialectical self-sursumption because in the new walls that are being build in our world we can see a radical transformation of the subject of social relations. Through a short-circuit in the logic of the symbolic order, the excluded stand for the people *as such* (what Žižek calls the “ambiguity of excremental identification”<sup>20</sup>): denied a place within the existing order, radically oppressed and exploited, the rejected have *no* private interests in a conventional sense; as a living embodiment of the contradictions plaguing our society, they are an immediate mouthpiece for the public use of reason. Robbed of everything, they have a direct access to pure universality without the mediation of a particular, that is, one's social identity and substance because this has been precisely lost to them: “one participates in the universal dimension of the 'public' sphere precisely as a singular individual extracted from, or even opposed to, one's substantial communal identification – one is truly universal only when radically singular, in the interstices of communal identities” (Žižek 2009a: 105). Living in the fracture line, the only way to include them, to give them a voice, is to internally reconstruct the very fabric of the politico-ontological constellation: their very concrete, singular desires demand a revolutionizing gesture. The fight of communism is therefore an attempt, from within the contradictions, the negative determination protruding out of our sociopolitical and economic existence, to tear apart the contemporary situation and build it up anew. It endeavours to bring forth a room in which an authentically political act is again possible, thinkable.

In the German documentary *Alien, Marx & Co. Slavoj Žižek – Ein Porträt*, Žižek makes a remark about slums which, when placed in this conceptual context, highlights what is exactly at stake in the contradictory fold of the today's political constellation:

If someone were to ask me, “What do you consider today a decisive social event [*Tatbestand*]?”, I would say: “Slums.” People living in slums are today the quickest growing groups of people world-wide. Huge crowds systematically caused by the process of globalization, thrown together, without possession, excluded from civil

rights and political participation – for example, failed self-employed entrepreneurs, farmers, who have lost their land and apart from that they all belong to different ethnic groups. In order to be able to survive, these people have to be utopian. Not in the sense of an impossible paradise, but rather realistically and radically. They have to improvise and invent a new way of life. I am no naïve historical determinist. Maybe it will happen, but maybe it also won't. But it is an opening, something that my friend Alain Badiou would call "the place of a possible event." (de Beaulieu and Farkas 2010)

The slum is the place of a possible event because it represents a negative determination, a "bone in the throat" of the Symbolic, which has already gained a certain degree of distance from the internal paradoxes of capitalism and therefore simultaneously concretizes an on-going, real struggle of founding a new order. Slums are so philosophically important because *they are already on the outside, they are already existing apart from the given order, even if they are only generated by and therefore immanently dependent upon it; they therefore circumscribe a possible place outside of ideology and the logic of capitalism and signal a new way of life*. In them something emerges which we are desperately lacking – true utopia and political imagination, but we must qualify what this means. The excluded living in slums are not lost in the fetish perversion which allows us to keep at bay the spectral Real destabilizing our lives, nor are they caught within the endless debates which characterize today's politics, debates infinitely circulating around issues, making ceaseless compromises, but never amounting to any substantial change. They are the living embodiment of the paradoxes immanent to our world, of everything that is wrong with it; they are not merely conceptually expressive of ideal points of symbolic fracture and discord, the weakest link in the logical chain underlying our sociopolitical and economic existence, but existentially live through this unbearable non-coincidence. Yet, they do not despair. Instead of renouncing everything, they live in utopia; they develop a new form of political imagination, which enables them to find a new way of life. It is only with the upholding of this potential that a new order can be brought forth which could internally restructure our current world order.

### **III. Ontological Catastrophe and Political Imagination**

Žižek's communist hypothesis attempts to posit a disjunction: either capitalism or communism. As we have seen, the problem for Žižek is that the overwhelming majority of our problems can be overcome *within* the matrix of the solipsistic production of capital. It is



not a choice between true, liberal democracy and totalitarian socialism, as it is often presented in the media (especially the American), but a choice between what Badiou calls *capitalo-parlementarism*<sup>21</sup> and radical, universal democracy in which the excluded, instead of being increasingly exploited, oppressed and denied political voice, are given the right to participate, that is, to internally restructure the political fold. For both thinkers, one cannot understate the complexity of the communist struggle. In contrast to other political constellations of being, capitalism radically undermines all event-openings. Because it demonstrates a constant state of revolutionizing, we cannot simply search for the ideologico-critical junctures of symptomatic contortion in order to internally restructure and overhaul its apparatus by attacking the weak links in the symbolic chain – it uses its own internal limitations to propagate itself, appropriating its own contradictions and reformatting its own structure accordingly. This means that capitalism in and of itself has no stable, comprehensive structure: it displays an underlying worldlessness; a profound ability of infinite self-upheaval and self-overthrowing is already an essential component of its logico-notional structure – or, to be more precise, it possesses a minimal level of self-relationality. Consequently, it is difficult today to sustain the opening of the event from within a politics of the Real: as soon as an authentic act emerges, it risks becoming a mere mechanism for the self-enhancement of capitalism.

However, Žižek's analyses go much further. If capitalism truly represents a kind of shift from substance to subject within our own activity, then this underlying, constitutive worldlessness is actually only a secondary effect, which arises from the transcendental autonomy of capital as a self-enclosed, solipsistic sphere of self-regulating, self-grounding movement. Capitalism can only exert such a powerful influence over us because it is a violent colonization of our own concrete, originally creative activity, which is able to articulate itself according to its own whims. Emerging out of the logical interstices of the ever-growing in complexity interconnectedness of sociopolitical and economic existence, it represents an internal limit that cannot be easily (if at all) annulled, counteracted or sursumed, just as humanity stands for an extimate kernel devastating the unity and self-harmonizing movement of nature. Žižek's theorization of the concrete sociopolitical deadlock facing us, therefore, appears to actually redouble and intensify the impasse instead of offering a way out, despite the fact that there are hopeful descriptions of the potentiality latent in negativity and non-coincidence and the possibility of justice scattered throughout his writings. Once such a hegemonizing, self-relating negativity – which displays, one must remember, a minimal degree of irreducible *notional self-reflexivity* – has

broken through and restructured the coordinates of being, it has unclear if we can truly fight against and reverse such a parallax shift. If such a negativity emerges out of us, how are we to escape it? Žižek's philosophy implicitly supplies two interrelated answers.

Predicated upon the possibility of logical fracturing, breakdown and irreconcilable internal conflict, the Žižekian dialectic prevents any self-enclosed, all-consuming one. Because there can be no self-harmonizing, self-totalizing system, the Real can always potentially restructure and devastate any given symbolic unity. It always threatens to irrevocably dominate any constellation (whether it be ontological, scientific, political). Therefore, the Real is not a mere obstruction or structural limit – it also can be the place from which the coordinates of the possible and impossible are irreversibly reconfigured. The lesson, therefore, is not that we should accept our fate, our self-loss in capitalism: no matter what the strength of capitalism is, the power of the negative cannot be superseded; it ceaselessly brings forth the new out of the unstoppable and unpredictable logical disintegration and collapse that is internally generated from within every given order. Nothing is *a priori* excluded in terms of action. Put in other terms, the impossible *happens*:

It seems that Lacan also fits this logic perfectly: does the illusory fullness of the imaginary fantasy not cover up a structural gap, and does psychoanalysis not assert the heroic acceptance of the fundamental gap and/or structural impossibility as the very condition of desire? Is this, exactly, not the “ethics of the Real” – the ethics of accepting the Real of a structural impossibility? However, what Lacan ultimately aims at is precisely the opposite; let's take the case of love. Lovers usually dream that in some mythical Otherness (“another time, another place”), their love would have found its true fulfillment, that it is only the present contingent circumstances which prevent this fulfillment; and is the Lacanian lesson here not that one should accept this obstacle as structurally necessary, that there is NO “other place” of fulfillment, that this Otherness is the very Otherness of the fantasy? No: the “Real as impossible” means here that THE IMPOSSIBLE DOES HAPPEN, that “miracles” like Love (or political revolution: “in some respects, a revolution is a miracle,” Lenin said in 1921) DO occur. From “impossible TO happen” we thus pass to “the impossible HAPPENS” – this, and not the structural obstacle forever deferring the final resolution, is the most difficult thing to accept: “We'd forgotten how to be in readiness even for miracles to happen. (Žižek 2001: 83-84)

Indeed, one must remember that the ontological essence of capitalism, like every true event in human history, was once too an impossibility, something unforeseeable.<sup>22</sup> There is no final end point; there is only a series of ruptures in the logical fold of the world irreconcilable to one another.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Žižekian notion of ontological catastrophe allows us to

confront this same issue from a different angle. Although Žižek argues for the transcendental autonomy of capital over us, his own appropriation of the paradoxical nature of subjectivity in German Idealism enables him to argue for the irremovable logical primacy of the subject. Given the *quadruple* dialectical structure of his account of the ontogenesis of human subjectivity (Logic → Nature → finite Spirit → objective/naturalized Spirit),<sup>23</sup> what is clear is that there is an irreconcilable parallax split between substantial being and culture. As the impossible “in-between,” the subject represents the self-collapse of the positive order of substance, its irreconcilable non-coincidence to self. As a frenzied, denaturalized space of uncontainable unruliness, the pure “I” prevents the overlapping of nature and culture and is thus of itself incommensurable with the two: setting up the entire sphere of culture as an immanent response to the deadlock of nature, the zone of activity that it grounds is always unable to succeed in fulfilling the task given to it; as that which holds both culture and substantial being (mind and body) negatively together in a relation of irreconcilable discord to one another, it protrudes out of both as infinite self-relating negativity and, therefore, could never be completely subsumed within the political constellation of capitalism just as much as it can never return to “balanced” movements of nature. The subject's lack of ontological positivity is therefore not a weakness, but a strength: its constitutive level of non-coincidence formally represents the possibility of ever new sociopolitical change, it enables the always possible groundless gesture of founding a new world order: the various attempts to fill in the gap, to give (virtually) positive content to the tragic ontological catastrophe that is the subject, can never succeed in solving the primordial antagonism that is at its foundational core.

The transcendental autonomy of capital therefore has to be dialectically contrasted with that of the human subject. Arising out of an original deadlock within the positive fold of substantial being, the human subject can irrevocably hegemonize its natural, self-harmonizing unity. Capital, on the other hand, does not have human *subjectivity* as its ground because subjectivity is in itself a radical nothingness, a terrifying vortex that threatens to consume everything (even itself) through its pure, psychotic freedom. Consequently, capitalist relations are doubly removed from being for Žižek because they arise out of the virtually positive sphere of sociopolitical and economic activity which the unruliness of the subject sets the stages for – they demonstrate paradoxical withdrawal of psychosis into itself, a contraction of the nocturnal *Innenwelt* of human freedom into another zone infinitely discordant with that out of which it emerged. But because human subjectivity in and of itself protrudes out of nature and the Symbolic, there is a limit to how

much capital can parasitically hegemonize it, at least in terms of its own self-grounding notional reflexivity – it always rests logically prior and superior, even if this power rests dormant and can be ultimately destroyed at its roots. What drastically distinguishes the transcendental autonomy of the subject from that of capital, therefore, is *the irreducibility of ontological catastrophe* which makes the former not only *logically prior* in terms of the ontogenetic history of the latter, but also *logically superior* with respect to it: the impossible can happen in the political realm because the real ground of subjectivity can never be notionally sursumed into another zone of irreducible activity. By tarrying with the negative, the subject can in principle overthrow any given order and found the new – it can destroy the reign of capital without destroying itself, whereas if capital were to annihilate subjectivity, it too would vanish. Moreover, we see something remarkably singular in the human subject and its capacity for *universalization*: despite its egotistical tendencies and parasitic unruliness, the subject sets up a space within which we are able come together and politically act, to take into consideration the needs of others through discourse. This is strictly speaking lacking in other forms of (self-relating) negativity we see in Žižek: logical breakdown, sickness and disease, natural disasters, various forms of dysfunctions, and especially that of capital. Whereas negativity generally displays an anonymous, destructive force, in the form of human subjectivity it has the potential to do more. In its self-relationality it can manage to convert its ontologico-excremental foundation into something intrinsically positive and good, and hence why Žižek is so adamant to call the ontogenetic event of human freedom not merely a traumatic event of ontological collapse but also as a “miracle.” Here something radically new and unpredictable emerges in the world – the possibility of justice. Žižek's descriptions of the cacophonous horror of being are not merely an attempt to theorize the implications of radical material contingency and finitude, but also how these can render possible a politics of the Real capable of sustaining a universal democracy (which he, perhaps unfortunately, calls communism) from within the domination of capitalo-parlementarism and its paradoxes. A limit is never a mere limit, an impasse a mere impasse – even the infinite collapse of the positive fold of that which is can be an irreducibly creative force. Ontological catastrophe is the condition of the possibility of political imagination.<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

The complex intermingling of politics and ontology in Žižek's philosophy brings to light two interrelated points that we must always have in mind when we read any aspect of Žižek's work: (i) its intrinsically *systematic* character despite all its labyrinthine digressions and use of an often astounding combination of different and even radically irreconcilable thinkers, an intellectual gymnastics which his critics quite wrongfully claim prove he is a charlatan merely trying to hide the fact that he is not capable of a true level of methodological thinking; and (ii) that it is thus impossible to advocate Žižek's radical politics of the Real *without* at the same time advocating its underlying ontology.

To limit Žižek to the sphere of culture studies and sociopolitical critique is a gross limitation of the reach and originality of his thinking. Even if the majority of his writings can be said to be oriented towards ideology and an analysis of contemporary state of affairs, Žižek, like all of the greater thinkers in the history of philosophy, offers us a complex and nuanced system which spans all areas of thinking in a comprehensive and interrelated way, whether it be in the practical or theoretical domains. Žižek refuses to separate them from one another in any absolutist sense: he realizes that a metaphysics of the Real has direct consequences for how we are to relate to ourselves and the world in the same way that a theory of the sociopolitical subject must imply an underlying ontology. The two questions may have different stakes and ultimately different theoretical objects of inquiry, but at a certain level they must be conceptually weaved together. Accordingly, for Žižek, the task of thinking is to think the whole and we can never limit ourselves to merely regional studies, for if we restrict ourselves to the latter we risk losing sight of the matter at hand. We see this most clearly, for instance, in Žižek's analysis of capital: if we stick to the latter's macabre dance which decides the fate of entire populations in its solipsistic throes, we would fall into the despair – for if we did not simultaneously investigate into the metaphysical structure of objective reality as revealed by the event of subjectivity, we would never have come across the underlying ontology of political imagination, the always formally possible founding of new world orders constitutive of what it is to be a subject. To say that philosophy if it is to be truly philosophy, then it must be *science* in the strictly Hegelian sense of the word,<sup>25</sup> implies more than the ideal of epistemic closure and completeness: metaphysics not only has an explanatory reach inclusive of the political, but the two can dynamically inform one another in perhaps unexpected ways.

In another vein, if it is true that the future of so-called speculative philosophy emerging in the Anglo-Saxon world will centre around how it will be able to respond to “politics/ethics, temporality, subjectivity/consciousness, and science/truth” (Byrant, Srnicek and Harman 2011: 16) then we must say that many of the questions which remain unanswered to other thinkers in this exciting and emerging tradition working in this metaphysical turn have already found systematic and original answers in Žižek’s thinking. As one of the most prolific systematic thinkers of this century, we could turn to him not merely for the daring gesture of his radical politics, but also as a model for how philosophy should occur in the aftermath of a call for a new metaphysics, but also for conceptual resources on how to precede. Yet, we must be very precise at this juncture. Because politics and ontology are so intimately related in Žižek’s thinking, this means that, if we are to defend the political position he offers, *we must go all the way*: political imagination is only possible because the human subject is originarily an *ontological catastrophe*, a *dysfunctioning* in the heart of a nature, which tears apart the fabric of the world. Are we ready for this?

- 1 Žižek 2000a: "The Spectre of Capital," 11-18.
- 2 Žižek 2000a: 12.
- 3 Žižek 2000a: 12.
- 4 I owe this idea to Adrian Johnston. Cf. Johnston 2008: 269-270.
- 5 For a detailed account of Žižek's encounter with cognitive science, see Žižek 2009b: "The Unbearable Heaviness of Being Divine Shit," 146-199.
- 6 For a full discussion, see Schelling 2003: 223-225.
- 7 Here one must also take note that ground and existence are both "contemporaneous" logical relations just as much as stages of historical development. Although the primordial decision brought forth by unconscious decision creates two irreconcilable ages or epochs, they both exist simultaneously after the split, even if the former represents the ontogenetic "past" of the latter. It is in this way that the body as an independent entity existing in infinite contradistinction to the mind can still act and follow its own laws, even if mind is ultimately logically superior to it and exists in its own free register after its hegemonizing self-positing (or, to speak differently, it is thus that natural cyclical time can still exist alongside out-of-joint dialectical temporality in human being). The neuronal interface can exist in two times: the eternal "past" of nonconscious material pulsation and the eternal "presence" of self-consciousness, held together in productive contradiction through the subject as the impossible in-between generated by the negativity of being.
- 8 Schelling 2000a: 91.
- 9 One must remember that, for Žižek, freedom is not linked to existential selfhood, the non-relational core of self-conscious reflexivity, as in the tradition of modern philosophy, but rather to the impersonal and faceless void of negativity. In this sense, negativity is not formally limited to *human being*, but could emerge in any given logical system where a self-relating point of notional fracture emerges. What remains to be seen is what differentiates the particularity of human freedom from other forms of self-positing negativity: its ability to tarry with itself.
- 10 Žižek & Daly 2004: 59.
- 11 Carew 2011: 15.
- 12 Here I follow the spirit of some French translations of *Aufhebung* by using *sursumption* (developed on the basis of and in contrast to *subsumption*) instead of the conventional *sublimation* for three reasons. Firstly, it prevents any possible confusion of the dialectical movement with the psychoanalytical concept of sublimation, either in its Freudian or Lacanian modality. Secondly, it helps distance us from an understanding of the dialectic as some kind of activity of "conceptual purification," where the internal contradictions of two conflicting positions are overcome, so that their truth is preserved and their falsehood annihilated in a great new notional synthesis. This "conservative" interpretation goes against Žižek's understanding of the truth of Hegelian dialectics as involving an irreducible moment of irreconcilable parallax grounded because it fails to take account of the activity of self-relating negativity implicit to the entire movement. Thirdly, it situates itself within Hegel's understanding of the dialectics as in contradistinction to the Kantian judgement as a way of *subsuming* the particular under the universal. A *surumption*, therefore, immediately gives a kind of direct intuition of the logical core of the process that does not in any way obstruct the task ahead of us.
- 13 Žižek 2000a: 14-15 & Žižek 2001: 18-19.
- 14 Consequently, the reification of irreducibly world-creating activity in the market is simultaneously accompanied by the "psychologization" of capital (Žižek 2009a: 141-142). That means we should always be suspicious of explanations of acts like those of Bernard Madoff, a former American stockbroker who was the operator of one of the largest schemes in history, which are so omnipresent in today's media. The condemnation of these acts as a moral error, a personal ignominy or a mere individual pathological greed is pure ideology for Žižek: Madoff is only an expression, a mere placeholder, for the essence of the self-producing dance of capital: the pyramid scheme is *the* principle of capitalism; there is no difference between "justified" and "wild" speculation. Madoff is an essential part of the structural core of capital and cannot be removed without an immanent reconfiguration of the current world-order. See Žižek 2009a: 39-41.
- 15 In this context, Žižek often turns to Badiou as an ally, drawing upon his own work as inspiration. See for instance Badiou 2007 & 2009.
- 16 Žižek 2009a: 88.
- 17 Marx and Engels say something similar: "Communism is for us a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes [*aufhebt*, that is, *sursumes*] the present states of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence" (Marx & Engels : 56-57).
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- 19 The following two paragraphs are a summary of the section "The New Enclosure of the Commons," 86-

94.

20 For a discussion, see Žižek 2000b: 228-232.

21 Badiou 2008: unpaginated

22 Cf. Johnston 2008: 269-270

23 Žižek 2000b: 82. For a discussion, see Carew 2011: 6ff.

24 Interestingly, insofar as Žižek claims that the primary breakthrough of transcendental imagination is the genetically prior moment of ontological *destruction*, an immanent tearing apart of the vital field of being, as that which sets up its synthetic *reconstruction* in experience by subjectivity, then he also implicitly maintains the *political status of transcendental philosophy as such*. Transcendental philosophy establishes that, insofar as the subject exists, reality is not all – and this ontological proposition has necessary practico-concrete implications.

25 As Hegel says (1991: 38-39):

The science of [philosophy] is essentially a system, since what is concretely true is so only in its inward self-unfolding and in taking and holding itself together in unity, i.e., as totality. Only through the distinguishing, and determination of its distinctions, can what is concretely true be the necessity of these distinctions and the freedom of the whole.

[Anmerkung.] A philosophizing without system cannot be scientific at all; apart from the fact that philosophizing of this kind expresses on its own account a more subjective disposition, it is contingent with regard to its content.

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